

The little “c” catholic organization: Ecumenicalism and the moral order of work

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CATHOLICS AND WORK: REFLECTIONS ON THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

Catholic, “Big C”, is the institution formed in the 1st century AD from an amalgamation of Christian sects. “Little c”, catholic, is the church founders’ pluralistic philosophy of inclusiveness – universal acceptance. We propose the struggle between “Big C” and “Little c” is emblematic of how an organization and organization theory confront ethical dilemmas. “Big C” organizations and organization theorists adjudicate hot, emotive issues through the cool, obfuscating language of high priests seeking resolution through participative decision-making. Alternatively, “little c” organizations and organization theory emphasize collective analysis that seeks mutual understanding through perspective sharing and praxis. In this paper we explore the dialectics of catholicism (Big C and Little c) and critical postmodern theory (Big CT and little ct) through a dialogue between a neophyte practitioner and an erudite critical theorist seeking solutions for the ethical dilemma of international sweatshops. We conclude by recommending a pragmatic critical theory that moves beyond the participative workplace to create the ecumenical organization as the moral order of work.

The gargantuan Gothic parapet topped by spires with medieval orbs and crowned by a blackened iron cross, towers emblematically over micrified human constructions effaced by its grandeur. Beneath its shadow lies the House of the Three Kings once the home to a shop carrying canes, parasols and knitwear. The shop proprietor's son, Franz Kafka, wrote that the fortress church "bordered on the limits of scale that human beings could bear" (1925/1956: 262) outside of which he "reclected how even as a child he had been struck by the fact that in the houses of this narrow square nearly all the window blinds were invariably drawn down" (1925/1956: 255). Accordingly, Tyn Church in Old Town Prague, a Catholic bricolage built on foundations of an ecumenical, "catholic" faith, dialectically symbolizes both universalistic order and universal good — a metamorphosis of brotherly love into institutional control.

This Gothic backdrop serves as the foundation to a story we have to tell of the Kafkaesque worlds we construct to remove the complexity and answerability of human affairs. The granite walls of this grand cathedral symbolize the replacement of involving acts of selfless kindness towards others with passive, ritualized actions and preaching of what ought to be done. The grandeur of the hallowed walls we erect in denial of our fallibility hide decadent and embarrassing truths which we hope will be overshadowed by good intentions. But our sins cannot be dispensed by simple confession. Organizational salvation depends not on rational institutional adjudication but on individual emotive praxis.

So let's depart from the stilted words of "ivory" tower speech with its pretense of having avoided the blackening ossification of religious righteousness. Our purpose is to meet the reader halfway and seek an ethical response to globalization and international sweatshops through understanding how current critical postmodern debates were prefigured by the tensions and power struggles in the early Catholic Church¹. In the text to follow, we engage in a reflexive dialogue from two very different perspectives. David Tobey, former entrepreneur and financial consultant, speaks the voice of the pragmatist searching for win-win solutions that embrace all perspectives to move beyond mere participative workplaces to ecumenical communities of practice. He is a devout, moral

¹ We wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting to formulate our thesis in these terms.

absolutist and defender of voices often lost during critical and postmodern analysis: customers, shareholders, and managers.

David Boje, professor and self-proclaimed Critical Postmodernist, seeks to advance and resituate marginalized voices. He exposes dominant corporate narratives and empty, rationalistic “objectives” of so-called “empowerment,” economic development, and the idea of progress. Boje also studies and teaches the theatrics of management and the power of stories. So, let’s begin by having David Boje tell you a story.

July 7, 2001. I was in Heather Hopfl’s track on Theatre. I was doing a rip on Nike Theatrics and I was doing it with an emotive-ethical delivery. I told stories of how women have their work day stretched in Nike’s quota system which Karl Marx (1867/1967, Chapter X, *The Working Day*: p. 233, 256) would call vampirism — sucking the last living drop of blood out of labor. Niggling break time, getting them to clock in early, and stay late. Yet not paying them by clock hours, but by doing 2,000 or more pieces a day, more if they are in quality control, more if its peak season.

The negotiation of Nike’s contract with contract factories is what puts the pressure on. It’s much like the Wal-Mart effect, where contractors have to lower prices, cut labor pay, increase what postmodernists call performativity. Performativity is defined by Lyotard (1979/1984) as the ratio of inputs to outputs. One of the inputs is labor time. One of the outputs is quotas of good products per worker per day. Performativity in its extreme is work until you drop dead from exhaustion. Nike’s contracts, for example, are to the microsecond, specifying how many microseconds to stitch a shoe, cut a piece of fabric, make a rubber mold, glue pieces together, etc. In peak season workers work seven days a week, 16 or more hours until the quota is met.

Contracts specify what portion of total time that Nike pays the contractor for a shoe will go to labor. It’s pennies per shoe. Based upon the performativity output ratio, controlling for inflation, women workers’ wages in the athletic shoe and apparel industry has gone down. Yes, the factories are cleaner than in the early 1990s. Yes, there are fewer reports of children under 16 working in them. Yes, there is monitoring by the corporate-funded Fair Labor Association (FLA). However, they are still sweatshops, with the cycle of migrating to countries with even cheaper labor pools.

An alternative view is promoted in a 1997 report by a Hong Kong investment house known now as JF Funds Ltd. They coined the term the *Nike Index* – the claim that the standard of living index improves wherever Nike places a facility. The process begins when Nike enters a region in a low state of economic development directly through contracts with local suppliers or indirectly through relocation of subcontractor facilities. Next, the influx of new jobs increases the income base of the region which spurs further development. Third, workers leave the clothing industry to pursue employment in technology industries formed during the economic expansion causing Nike to relocate when labor rates rise. In summary, according to this view the employment opportunities shifted from U.S. and Western countries directly enable higher standards of living in these developing economies. Therefore, Nike is being falsely accused by its opponents of exploiting workers by paying wages substantially lower than prevails in Western economies. In defense of Nike and related outsourcing practices, editors of Business Week report:

The competitive advantage of many developing countries lies precisely in their lower costs of doing business. As Japan, Korea, and Taiwan have shown, the road to prosperity often begins with low wages and cheap exports. As skills increase, the sophistication and value of goods produced rise, allowing wages and income to move higher... It's one thing for corporations to pay decent local wages and follow local laws protecting workers. But buckling under to pressure to extend U.S. or European pay scales to emerging nations could mean shutting down local factories – hurting people, not helping them. ("Confronting Anti-Globalism," 2001)

A country such as Korea attracted Nike contracts away from the Japanese factories. Korean workers won concessions for working conditions and pay, still a worker made a dollar a day. Nike moves the plant to the Philippines. These workers try to organize, get pay increases, get quotas that have them working less than 16 hours a day, seven days a week. Nike moves the plant to Vietnam, to Thailand, to Mexico, to Honduras, and now to China. Each move lets the cycle begin again. The net result is Nike can make the audacious claim that it is the ambassador of economic development.

Then I perform a bit of theater about the gauntlet. The gauntlet took place in Mexico, in the state called Puebla, in the city of Atlixco, in a factory once called Kuk

Dong. Kuk Dong, like many factories, sold its production to two rivals. In this case Nike and Reebok made athletic apparel, much of it going to big university campuses with university logos and a swoosh or Reebok's logo.

I personally interviewed workers who were eyewitnesses to the gauntlet. The women were livid because they were being raped at random by Korean supervisors. Part of Nike Index is that most owners of factories are Korean or Taiwanese who took over production after Japanese workers won concessions. Korean owners are former soldiers and run their sweatshops with military discipline of boot camp cadre, yelling insults, hitting the workers, marching, etc.

The gauntlet occurred after women complained to human resources that maggots were in their food. Several were line supervisors (they are Mexican workers supervising quotas of 10 to 20 other workers). They also charge that they got less wages and none of the perks promised in the radio and newspaper ads.

After getting only minor results, more intense abuse occurred and supervisors were fired. The young women take over the plant and locked the doors. The Korean owners pleaded with their ambassadors, who implored the governor of Pueblo to send in a state militia armed with machine guns, billy clubs and riot gear. They also send in a squad of thugs. The militia breaks into the plant and chases the women, ages 15 to 22, out of the door where the gauntlet was assembled. Some women clutched their infants in their arms. During the lockdown, relatives had brought the infants to the mothers, along with food and blankets. Outside the door the gauntlet was assembled.

What is the gauntlet? It is two long rows of militia and the thugs armed with clubs. As the women run in panic chased by men with guns, they file out the narrow factory door and into the gauntlet. They are beaten about the head, chest, back, stomach, arms, and legs. 15 women were taken to the hospital and ambulances. Two women suffered miscarriages.

At this point in my presentation I was interrupted by a professor in Hopfl's theater of capitalism session at the EGOS (European Group for Organization Studies) conference. He said:

I did not come here to be made to feel guilty for my consumer purchases. I came to learn about theater. Your theater is too emotional, not detached enough.

I was speechless for a few long reflexive moments many things flashed through my mind then I said:

It's because of my Catholic upbringing. I cannot be a bystander!

Nike dazzles hero-worshipping consumers with Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods while women in their factories are working in sweatshops. Guilt comes from my Catholic upbringing. Not just that, but I worked for six years in a Jesuit university where there was an ethic of social justice.

In theater terms, my activism expresses the backstage aspects of Nike's spectacle theater. I use an emotive-ethical manner of theater to perform a range of emotions that explores the ethics of answerability. Nike and its contractors are answerable for sweatshop conditions, for gauntlets, for dazzling consumers with sports legends, earning them more a year in endorsements than women workers in the sweatshops will earn in 30 lifetimes. As to emotion, theater is emotive sensemaking!

The room breaks out into that kind of academic furor that reminds me of old time Shakespearean theater at the Globe, where those in the pit did not sit quietly as audience and actors improvised accordingly.

This brings us to the topic of our paper: what is Big "C" and Little "c" Catholicism and how can the battle between elitist and popular forces during the founding of the Christian religion inform our ability to address the issues raised in the Nike story? We propose to answer these questions by exploring current debates in postmodern thought that attempt to address the ethical dilemmas raised by the increased economic opportunities of globalization and its underbelly of corruption and abuse. We conclude by proposing a "Little c" catholic approach to organization that seeks the middle path – suggesting a pragmatic turn for postmodern thought – which discards dialectic approaches that too often replace one hegemony with another in favor of a perspectival (multiple perspective) approach. In so doing, we seek to move beyond simply enabling differing belief systems to participate in universalistic decisions to an ecumenical order of work that seeks collective answerability for universal benefits.

FRAMING THE DEBATE

As economists have noted, standards of living and wealth are rapidly increasing in developing countries, primarily located in the Far East, as a result of lowered trade barriers and resulting shifts in labor sourcing. At the same time, multinational companies, primarily U.S. based, are struggling to adapt participative management practices to foreign cultures that condone hegemonic authority, coercion and abuse in order to achieve lower costs. If these practices lead to worker revolts or excessive social pressures that force multinational companies to abandon local producers who commit the heinous acts such as occurred at Kuk Dong, the fragile developing economy may collapse.

The rapid pace of globalization is causing more and more companies to confront this ethical dilemma. The reputation of multinationals, such as Nike, that operate as virtual manufacturers through outsourcing relationships in developing countries is being severely threatened by the backlash against their subcontractor labor practices. What is the right response? Does organization theory, specifically the management of spirituality in the workplace, offer an ethical solution?

The perspectives of Boje and Tobey suggest different approaches to answering these questions. In Boje's opening story and theatre, his emotive-ethical sensemaking prompts a once-occurrent moment of Being and participative guilt of complicity. Like his fellow critical theorist, Bakhtin (1990), he calls for a more emotive reading of ethics and performs indissolubility of emotive-ethics emotion and reason. Boje had taken the pure observer's standpoint into an emotional performance of reenactment of the blows of the gauntlet. He also performed the double narration of the rational-observer's standpoint of the women workers he interviewed, giving grounds and warrants for their claims of cause-effect relationships.

Conversely, Tobey finds much of critical writing on corporate ethics and moral responsibility is strewn with language only accessible to the intellectual elite, and consequently appears impractical to the non-specialist, practitioner. Tobey agrees that emotive-ethical sensemaking is required to effectively address the ethical dilemmas posed by globalization and to eliminate simplistic, rationalistic justifications underlying

corporate claims of social responsibility. But, he prefers a more pragmatic approach as suggested by Nietzsche (1956/1887, p. 255):

The more emotions we allow to speak in a given matter, the more different eyes we can put on in order to view a given spectacle, the more complete will be our conception of it, the greater our ‘objectivity’.”

Thus, through contrasting the perspectives of the academic and the practitioner, we hope to help the reader navigate the turbulent waters of the postmodern world of globalization and find a path to developing a sustainable solution – the creation of a new moral order of work. Boje contributes the perspective of the critical theorist looking to deconstruct and resituate corporate practices that result in growing numbers of sweatshop factories throughout the developing world. Alternatively, Tobey introduces the voice of the pragmatist and seeks to discover common ground, shared understanding, and mutual respect such that all parties may profit from the global economic boom.

Both Davids are Catholics in the Big “C” and Little “c” sense. Both were raised in a Judeo-Christian tradition governed by Big “C” institutional mandates and constraints. Yet, both also find hope and solace in the potential for Little “c” organizations that embrace differences as an effective means to address the ethical dilemmas of globalization. For both, solutions to these problems require understanding of the links between the ideas of the early Christian church and early critical approaches to social change.

THE UNIVERSAL BECOMES UNIVERSALISTIC

Big “C” is defined as the institution of Catholicism, which has a social justice orientation. Little “c” is spiritual, the kind of an emotional charismatic directly communicating with spirit without institutional mediation who feels answerable for any act of unkindness or injustice. Big “C” and Little “c” is a philosophical dualism and dialectic of unity and plurality.

In the early years following the crucifixion of Christ, interpretations of his message and meaning were abundant. A pluralistic faith based on *radical* principles of equality (between rich and poor, men and women, Pharisee and laic) rampantly spread a

message of personal salvation through rejecting Aristotelian objective science in favor of experiential, perspectival insight, what the Greek's termed *gnosis*. Hindu and Buddhist teachings dialogized Christian faith as the disciples traveled to India and the Far East along nascent trade routes (Pagels, 1979).

The resulting polytheistic interpretations were discussed and debated. Similar to Jewish scholars studying the Talmud today where “truth is forged in an evolution of changing and conflicting ideas” (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 63). Knowledge of God resulted from dialogue, not dictum. Emotive, charismatic, individual experience superceded canon as the path to enlightenment. Gospels proliferated both to aid interpretation and to instruct followers in appropriate methods of achieving grace. As a result, over a 200 year period, a faith based on catholic, meaning *universal*, love and acceptance rapidly gained converts whose prior gods were assimilated while maintaining angelic status (Crites, 1975).

However, over time these interpretive positions calcified and dialogue degenerated into discord. The tumult reached an apex around 200 A. D. when two sects coalesced, Orthodox and Gnostic, each claiming to have epistemic superiority. Ironically, a faith founded on principals of an ecumenical Little “c” catholic faith was becoming Big “C” Catholic with individualistic charismatic faith replaced by choices of elitism or objectivism:

Gnostic Christians... quoting a saying of Jesus (“By their fruits you shall know them”)... required evidence of spiritual maturity to demonstrate that a person belonged to the true church. But orthodox Christians, by the late second century, had begun to establish objective criteria for church membership. Whoever confessed the creed, accepted the ritual of baptism, participated in worship, and obeyed the clergy was accepted as a fellow Christian... To become truly *catholic* — universal — the [Orthodox] church rejected all forms of elitism, attempting to include as many as possible within its embrace. (Pagels, 1979, p. 104)

The Little “c” universal acceptance was, for a time, dialectic to Big “C’s” Catholic division between clergy and laity. Over the centuries a transformation of the universal Little “c” into the universalistic Big “C” occurred. Epistemic plurality was replaced by totalizing objective laws establishing unity among all the Catholic branches

supported by Big “C” as a sort of tree trunk. An ecumenical faith which allowed for multiple Gods (not one), mother and father God/Goddess, women taking on roles of priestess, was replaced by a participative faith, but one in which women were not allowed to hold institutional offices, priestess or otherwise. Finally, the nature of participation became decidedly hierarchical in Big “C.” Previously, the ecumenical pattern was to prevent hierarchy by drawing lots for who would act as priest/priestess, read scriptures, lead prayers, etc. While there is currently a resurgence of Little ‘c’ it is hardly a dialectic antithesis to Big ‘C’ institutional forms of participation and patriarchy.

TRANSCENDING A PARTICIPATIVE ETHOS: A RENAISSANCE OF ECUMENICALISM

As with Big “C” and Little “c”, we can think of a similar duality arising in postmodern critical theory — Big “CT” and Little “ct” (Boje, 2007) — whose early mission and writings contain approaches to resolving the ethical dilemmas raised by the Nike story. While Critical Theory and Postmodern theory were forming during the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, the aesthetic roots of a postcolonial movement was championing pluralism and restoring multidimensionality to humanistic thought that was more cognizant of race and gender. In stark contrast to modernity’s realism, a *renouveau catholique* renaissance of early Christian beliefs began in France during the 1880s and continued through the post-war Great War period. Dubbed “mystic modernism” by its chronicler, Stephen Schloesser (2005), it revived and resituated neo-scholastic teachings of Thomas Aquinas and epistemic but inaccessible eternal moral truth. With biting critique of positivist, materialist society, these critical theorists (Little “ct”) disclosed “natural disorder in all its forms, including sexuality, sickness, insanity, crime and poverty” (Schloesser, 2005, p. 37). They foreshadowed postmodern, nihilistic critiques in which chaos predominates over order in nature (Letiche, 2003). Accordingly, it was called the Decadent movement by its adversaries.

Decadence is a little “ct” critical as well as pragmatist movement associated with the novels of Huysmans, poetry of Baudelaire, and the music of Wagner. Decadent authors are critical of objectivist claims and cognitive focus, preferring to denote a more

emotive-charismatic approach and the rediscovery of immaterial truth, what Huysmans would refer to as ‘double lines’:

In an 1882 letter to Edmond de Goncourt, Huysmans praised a novel for its ‘unique art of evocation, that is to say, *an art of double lines*. Under the line which is written and printed, there is another which is silent ... in an invisible and sympathetic ink.’ (quoted in Schloesser, 2005, pp. 39-40, emphasis in original)

Around the same time, an elite group of philosophers formed a Big “CT” movement eventually led by the Frankfurt School. They pursued a neo-Kantian moral philosophy to rescue Enlightenment by combining rational consensus, communicative rationality, and the emancipatory potential of social science into a rational-communicative ethics (see Boje 2007b for a review). As a leader of this movement, Habermas suggested that ethical dilemmas could be resolved through a “pragmatics of communicative reason” with both sides of an argument forming the “general history of the present” (Bohman, 2001, p. 87).

However, in phase two of the development of the Big “CT” movement (in which Habermas did not abide), Horkheimer, Adorno and their male colleagues turned away from neo-Kantian ethics, and towards a critique of the Culture Industry – the control of media by big business and big political parties. According to their view, the main objective of the Culture Industry continues to be to keep any thoughts of an ethics of answerability (and complicity) from entering the minds of citizens. Therefore, ethical positions become incommensurable and only emotive-ethical appeals can bring about necessary change.

In like manner, Boje finds Habermas’ *pragmatics* is problematic. Boje does not agree with Habermas that he confine his theatrics to be a communicatively rational actor! He has a pivot point on the transcendental that is an umpire of sorts, where Habermas has argued that all postmodernist critiques would be inherently perspectival, even relativistic to an extreme. Boje, because he combines Critical Theory and Postmodern Theory into Critical Postmodern hybrid is not being relativistic. The questioner of his story is being both pragmatic about consumer guilt and calling for rational actor theatrics in an academic conference. No emotive-ethical performance, thank you very much! Boje

imagines the audience would prefer a “sociologic of rationality” to a “logic of perspective taking” (Bohman, 2001, p. 88).

Tobey suggests that the Little “ct” Decadent writers, unlike Habermas, offer a viewpoint wherein emotive support for marginalized voices does not constitute a relativistic postmodernism. Instead, they seek a revival of early Christian faith and its doctrine of hylomorphism which “coming from the Greek words *hulē* [matter] and *morphē* [form], holds that all real things are composed of two elements: material stuff that is pure potentiality, and the actuality of ‘form,’ an unseen causal force that gives order, unity, and identity to matter” (Schloesser, 2005, p. 6). Accordingly, the Decadents suggest a universal synthesis of the aesthetic, erotic, and religious experience that eliminates the rational vs. emotive dialectic:

Underlying [Critical Theory] assertions is the presumption that aesthetic, erotic, and religious experiences are or ought to be mutually exclusive and categorically pure. One of the great accomplishments of decadent writing, however, was essentially to deconstruct that presumption — to question it, to subvert it, to rehearse its contradictions, even at times to ridicule it. The decadents found that the Church was, and had always been, as sensual as it was spiritual, as pagan as it was Christian, as textual as it was transcendent. (Hanson, 1997, p. 18)

Resolving our debate, we find that in both the second phase Big “CT” and Little “ct” movements, taking the pragmatic turn in Critical Theory requires that we move beyond the oversimplified, cognitive and participative ethos (i.e. stakeholders reviewed in the mind of the manager) proposed by Habermas. Instead, we propose to engage in in-the-moment emotive-ethical debate that is a messier understanding than rational communicative-consensus. In the tradition of Talmudic and Gnostic scholars discussed above, we could restore an ecumenical order of “perspective-sharing” that is polyphonic – multiple voices, alternative logics, and fully-embodied emotions – to bring about collective understanding and shared commitment and answerability for corporate and individual action.

THE PRAGMATIC TURN

McCarthy defines a “pragmatic conception of democracy as a moral inquiry” (Bohman, 2001, p. 88). Boje has found that in the moment of theater there is a sort of

inquiry which can be retrospective and reflexive sensemaking. Each participant in the Kuk Dong gauntlet has their perspective as a stakeholder. Each is a perspectival character in the moment of the drama. Each has justification and rational purchase. Practical theories are distinguished by the politics by which they are embedded. Boje, for example, is a self-avowed critical postmodernist (CT phase one, plus Postmodern Theory). His politics is to do academic theatric performances that advance marginalized voices, in this case women workers in sweatshops, exposing a counter story to dominant corporate narratives of economic development, progress, and empowerment. Boje performs a contrasting of economic development retrospectives and disempowerment of women workers under late-modern global capitalism.

For example, Boje saw the photos of the injured women, saw the tears of sisters as they retold the events, read the FLA monitor (Verité) reports, and those of United States Against Sweatshops' (USAS) team of on-the-ground observers. But Boje does not give up on the transcendental, a God's eye view of ethics and social justice. Boje violates postmodern relativism by refusing to move back and forth between the perspective of Verité, FLA, Nike, Reebok, Korean owners, and that of the workers. Boje only performed, with emotive-relish, the women workers point of view of the gauntlet. He did not take the typical postmodernist relativist role to this viewpoint of playing one view off against the other.

For Tobey, a perspective which only seeks to represent marginalized voices is constrained in a paradigm of duality: narratives are dominant or marginalized and irreconcilable. However paradigms, both managerialist and postmodernist share underlying psychodynamics of interaction (Tobey, 2007). Bounded rationality (March & Simon, 1958) necessitates our attempts to reduce complexity and abstract emotion from everyday discourse. Without situational or technological assistance, we construct ritual and structure to simplify what William James called the "blooming, buzzing confusion" of 'reality'. A critical theory based on pragmatist pluralism would seek not simply sympathetic participation of polyphonic perspectives, but to develop methods and tools for developing empathetic perspective-sharing and teleological discourse based on a hylomorphic morality.

Accordingly, Tobey suggests that Verité was brought in by Nike to objectify and reify the story of Kuk Dong as a way to remove – or whitewash – the emotion of the beatings, the rapes, to make it acceptable in terms of corporate language (and published audits). Nike is cited by Verité for their wrongdoing, and they acknowledge their culpability. Under stress and to eliminate uncertainty and minimize risk, they enact a strategy of defensive avoidance (Janis & Mann, 1977) by reprimanding and subsequently terminating the subcontractor. They do not realize that they have prematurely cut-off discussion, failed to evaluate all the possible alternatives and the risk of the selected solution, and become victim to the common psychodynamic of groupthink (Janis, 1983).

This utilitarian approach to ethics fails to meet corporate goals for humanitarian treatment, damages Nike's reputation, and costs the company inestimable amounts in legal defense of class action suits and, most importantly, loss of goodwill. Their individual analytic focus fails to involve stakeholder perspectives and makes inevitable a tragic ending where all parties lose – Nike; local labor and economy; subcontractors; and consumers who ultimately must pay for the cost of relocation to a new plant in higher prices. In like manner, Tobey argues that a critical response that considers only the perspective of the workers also undertakes an individual analytic approach that cannot achieve collective benefits.

Boje speaks from a liberal democratic tradition of participative society that despite its well-founded ideals is rooted in an Enlightenment philosophy in which “society is believed to be a collection of self-regarding, independent, morally autonomous agents” (Schwandt, 1989, p. 11). Such an approach erects irreconcilable barriers between *haves* and *have-nots*, between *bourgeois* decision-makers and *proletariat* workers, assuming that their actions represent opposing moralities (reflective of their political positions) rather than common fallibilities inherent in the human condition.

PRAGMATIC CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY AS MODE OF INQUIRY

In a stakeholder theory emphasizing perspectival character agents, each stakeholder has “practical social knowledge of its justification and verification” (Bohman, 2001, p. 88). Reebok and Nike, for example, use the methodology of FLA monitoring to investigate the Kuk Dong gauntlet, and ensuing scandal. It is their method of verification, and their reports provide a justification for Nike claiming to be transparent about its practices (Boje & Schipper, 2007). The unions have their own method of verification and justification based on the concepts of surplus value created by Marxian philosophy (Marx, 1867/1886). Yet, this form of perspectival pluralism leaves some questions unanswered (Bohman, 2001, p. 89):

1. How do we reconcile these stakeholders perspectives?
2. How can their respective claims be made commensurable?
3. Is a hermeneutic process that seeks mutual understanding possible when agents like Boje perform emotive-ethical provocation?

For Boje, provocation of consumer ethics at the expense of women’s experience of the gauntlet is an act of political theater. It is also a mode of inquiry to explore marginalized voices by enacting counter-story to the hegemonic regime. For Boje’s spectator-questioner, this is not democratic deliberation and is very *improper* theater (a use of emotion in acting).

For Tobey, there is the possibility for a win-win pragmatist resolution of the stakeholder perspectives, one not rooted in dramaturgy, but in careful attention to paradigmatic and psychodynamic differences of participants (and closer to Habermas phase one CT), yet still rooted in little ‘c’ through the pursuit of disintermediating techniques for discovering common, futuristic, teleological ends.

Boje, on the other hand, penetrates a moral and ethical pluralism with his approach to the catholic, showing perspectives with irreconcilable differences. There is irresolvable conflict between various stakeholder perspectives, when Reebok and Nike are on stage. Nike adjudicates criticism by various stakeholders (USAS, unions, guilty consumers) by commissioning FLA, who in turn hires monitors, like Verité, to

investigate by doing field interviews with workers, supervisors and Kuk Dong human resources staff. Verité is known to be tough on corporations who violate human rights.

Does the FLA monitoring by Verité (which ironically means truth) reconcile conflicting stakeholder perspectives? No, each stakeholder claims reports (or counter reports) is more accurate than the others. Each reflects stakeholder practical knowledge that is from a specific point of view. The stakeholders become more entrenched.

Verité is Nike's "*knight*" sent to arbitrate conflicting perspectives (pun intended²). They met with USAS' graduate team, with Nike's labor practices staff, with Kuk Dong's human resources, owners and managers, etc. But did Verité, consultant hired by FLA, funded by Nike and Reebok, have the competence or charge to investigate and adjudicate a variety of stakeholder perspectives? To provide a normative solution?

1ST AND 3RD PERSON NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Boje's character is *I, We, and They* in theater community. Boje's emotive-ethics theater enunciates explicit and graphic knowledge of the stakeholder world from within the women workers' perspective to recover it from stakeholder community marginalization. The spectator's question points to Boje's lack of attempts to adjudicate the various stakeholder perspectives, a participant rather than detached academic, and that of consumer (who feels guilt in purchasing).

For Tobey, on the other hand, the futurist, ecumenical view anticipated by Bohman rejects first and third person accounts of practical knowledge such as hermeneutics or naturalism. Bohman argues for the second person narrator to find a perspectival pluralism that is not tied to any single method, or perspective of inquiry. This discredits Boje's first and third person theater performance at EGOS. Instead, a middle path should be sought by practicing empathetic listening and affirming the value of opposing goals and viewpoints.

Boje asks: "Is Verité 3rd person narration? Verité is not an inquirer choosing an optimal solution to the Kuk Dong gauntlet problem from a range of permissible solutions, deliberating relevant probabilities and stakeholder utilities based on objective criteria (see

² Philip Knight is the CEO of Nike.

Abbott, 1988 GLR model). Verité is the observing agent of FLA, whose clients are Nike and Reebok. Verité report is contextualized in its social network of reporting obligations to constitute politically practical knowledge.”

Boje continues, “Does Verité use a 1st person interpretive social science methodology? Verité makes explicit the meaningfulness of the women’s working conditions, the violations of Nike and Reebok’s own codes of ethics. Verité lists the derogatory verbal expressions Korean supervisors used to hail the Mexican women workers. Verité exhibits in their report writing a practical theory that reconstructs agent-relations to employers from bearer first-person narration. But, Verité is hired to see things from many stakeholder points of view and to provide first-person interpretations to its clients of how things are for FLA, and in turn for Nike and Reebok, and in turn for the Korean contractors, and in turn, last in the list, for Mexican women workers. It’s a matter of interpretive positions in the pecking order of interpretive responsibility.”

We agree that there is no getting around the fact that Nike is writing a history of many stakeholders in categories of the FLA protocol, and categories that are Verité’s own. Each stakeholder, we assume, has their own form of practical knowledge.

RORTY AND THE PRACTICAL TURN

Boje is a classic case of “ambiguity of rationality” between his states of “cognitive facility” and his “moral virtue” (Bohman, 2001, p. 91). Rorty wants to keep cognitive distinct from emotive-ethical. Boje, based on Bakhtin’s critical theory, seeks an architectonic interanimation of cognitive, ethical, and aesthetic theater performances at conferences.

Cognitivism is seemingly anti-human when reduced to rationality. Morality brings in transcendental concerns specifically banished by the Enlightenment project (Bauer, 1999). Putting stakeholders’ conflict into a strictly cognitive domain privileges the objectivist presumption of “a single correct answer.” (Bohman, 2001 p. 91)

“True” Tobey agrees. “But perspective-sharing and empathetic teleological discovery are necessary to cross and join cognitive perspectives.” The problem is not that every stakeholder plays only in the rational sphere (eg., Boje performance is

emotional, and at times transcendental). Nor, is conflict purely addressing thematic differences, but is waged at the syntactic, paradigmatic, and psychodynamic layers of human interaction (Tobey, 2006) which involve an interanimation of cognitive, aesthetic and ethical interests. We agree it is a reflective practice of architectonics.

To unite perspectives is to “engage in a form of reflective inquiry that crosses among them” (Bohman, 2001, 91; see also Letiche, 2003). Our inquiry suggests a call for a futurist turn in pragmatic critical theory where “the role of critical social sciences is to keep reflective practices open to a variety of possible perspectives and thus to maintain the productive tensions among them to make them vital and self-critical.” (Bohman, p. 91) In other words, to avoid premature coherence and collapse into solipsistic dichotomies based on cognitive differences.

Third person, technocratic approaches prescribe “the social scientist as ideally rational and informed actor” using a process in which “the range of permissible solutions is clearly delimited, the relevant probabilities and utilities precisely specified, and even the criteria rationality be employed (e.g., maximization of expected utilities) is clearly stated” Hempel (1965: 481, quoted in Bohman, 2001 p. 92). It has become popular in organizational studies to criticize such approaches as overly quantitative or positivistic. However, such Critical Theory (Big “CT”) methodology is simply a “sociologic of rationality”:

Our set of beliefs directs us to analyze social and political phenomena from both the inside and the outside, to capture both emic and etic views. Thus we can build elaborate structures of variables to portray in the language of social science what a social program achieves and how it works, and we can also gather qualitative data in an attempt to portray program understandings from the perspectives of program stakeholders. But because we believe in separating the spheres of descriptive and evaluative discourse, we tend not to examine the validity or worth of these phenomena that we analyze. In not raising questions about the moral meanings of practices and ends to be served by policies and programs, we fail recognize, as Sullivan (1986, p. 54) explains, that: “the authority of a polity are concretely, subtly woven by the kinds of moral meaning within which its members live.” (Schwandt, 1989, p. 14)

Hermeneutic and critical theories based on dialectics constrain perspective taking into forms of adjudication rather than conciliation and cooperation. “Unlike the third

person critical must claim epistemic superiority over other participants, the second person perspective is not yet transperspectival. Because the reflective participant must take up all stances, it is the proper attitude of critical inquiry. Only such an interspectival stance is fully dialogical” (Bohman, 2001, pp. 94-95). However, such perspective-sharing may only be possible when a transcendent morality underlies belief in common teleological futures in which diverse views do not simply participate but are interwoven into our constructions of reality.

We therefore return once again to the bricolages of church, organization and critical theory itself. We may continue to construct and deconstruct Kafkaesque edifices that blacken our view, ossify our differences, and stultify our efforts at creating postmodern organizations. Conversely, we may develop ecumenical communities by re-establishing the Little “c” values of disintermediation, emotive inquiry, hylomorphism, and the praxis of acceptance and inclusiveness. In so doing, perhaps we may bring about a renaissance in the workplace and the creation of a moral order of work.

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